



Joe Sanfelippo

Milwaukee County Supervisor - 17th District

November 2011



**MILWAUKEE COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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COMMITTEE

ASSIGNMENTS:

Personnel, Chair
Intergovernmental
Relations
Parks, Energy,
and Environment

Dear Friends and Constituents,

In the fall of 1621, 90 Wampanoag Indians and 52 English Colonists gathered for a three-day harvest feast. Little did they know that this would mark the beginning of a tradition that would continue for hundreds of years. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln declared the last day in November “as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens.”

Today, centuries later, we sit down with family and friends to celebrate this national holiday with little idea of what those first Colonists endured in the early days of what would eventually become the United States of America.

After a year-long battle of devastating disease and hunger, the abundant fall harvest was truly something special to celebrate. It provided a new sense of hope for the future at a time when many were questioning the wisdom of migrating to the new land.

There is no question that we have many challenges facing us today. But as we sit down to celebrate Thanksgiving later this month, let us pause for a moment just as those Colonists did 390 years ago, to give thanks and dwell on the blessings that we enjoy.

Happy Thanksgiving to you and your family,



Lakefront Development Plan

Recently, the Parks Energy and Environment Committee endorsed a Lakefront Redevelopment plan that was constructed by a special committee made up of individuals from the public and private sectors.

The plan contained the following six recommendations:

1. The redevelopment of the Downtown Transit Center site into a multi-story, high-value use more appropriate to its location at the lakefront.
2. The installation of a bicycle/pedestrian lane to and over the Hoan Bridge connecting Downtown to southern Milwaukee County for all modes of transportation.
3. The reconfiguration of the Lincoln Memorial Drive/Michigan Street intersection to provide an efficient and safe means of pedestrian conveyance, maintaining a balance with motorized transportation, and creating a revitalized front door to the City of Milwaukee.
4. The reconfiguration of the Lake Interchange ramps to free up valuable space for development and increase connectivity from Downtown and the Third Ward to the lakefront.
5. The continuation of O'Donnell Park in its current function in the short-term, while considering redevelopment options long-term.
6. Increased accessibility to and along the lakefront for all modes of transportation and greater connectivity to the City.

At the Parks Committee meeting, I introduced an amendment that would have removed the recommendation for the installation of a bicycle/pedestrian lane on the Hoan Bridge. In

my opinion, putting bicyclists and pedestrians on the bridge is dangerous and a bad idea. Unfortunately, my amendment failed.

Earlier this summer, we read in the news about a number of people who collapsed during a marathon run over the bridge. Last month we heard about a deadly accident that occurred when a motorist struck a car that was broken down on the side of the road. The driver of the broken down vehicle was thrown off the Hoan Bridge to his death. Just a few weeks ago, we had several days of strong wind gusts that made driving a vehicle over the bridge challenging enough. I can't imagine what it would have been like trying to bike or walk across it. And we all know how slippery bridges and overpasses get when they are snow-covered and icy in the winter.

In the end, I did vote in favor of the plan because it offered many good suggestions on improving the lakefront. Improving accessibility and redeveloping the severely underutilized Transit Center can add to the tax base of the County as well as the City of Milwaukee.

I hope that the Wisconsin Department of Transportation will see the potential danger of a bicycle/pedestrian lane and not include it in the final reconstruction plan.



O'Donnell Park Savings Evaporate

Earlier this year, County Executive Abele vetoed a plan to install decorative glass and aluminum panels on the east façade of the parking structure at O'Donnell Park. At the time, he projected the County would save \$500,000.

Though I voted against the installation of the panels in the first place, I also voted against the County Executive's veto because, while saving \$500,000 is great, we were throwing away \$750,000 to do it. Now, a report from county staff just last week informed us that the savings only added up to slightly over \$375,000, indicating even more money was wasted.

Some on the County Board are trying to lay the blame for this big money-losing blunder solely on the County Executive. But, in all fairness, that is not entirely true.

During the campaign for County Executive earlier this year, both candidates indicated they felt the added \$1.2 million cost of the panels was a waste of money, and they were right. Each candidate promised that, if elected, he would cut the funding.

Upon hearing this, some County Board members rushed through a resolution endorsing the panels. The passing of this resolution caused contracts to be issued so that by the time the newly elected County Executive vetoed the spending, \$750,000 was already committed.

If the County Board wouldn't have meddled into this affair by passing the resolution endorsing the panels, we would not have wasted nearly \$900,000 in taxpayer dollars.

This is a perfect example of why reforms to the County Board are desperately needed. Micro-managing by the County Board is a common occurrence and leads to waste and inefficiency.



Committee Increases Tax Levy in Proposed 2012 Budget

In his first budget since being elected, County Executive Abele proposed to freeze the property tax levy at the 2011 level. However, over the past month the County Board's Finance and Audit Committee has been reviewing the proposed budget and has approved amendments that would increase the property tax levy by \$5.8 million.

While it is true that the budget needed some improvements, those improvements could have been made without increasing spending.

For example, some Deputy Sheriff positions were restored to allow the department to continue providing safety patrols in our parks. This was a needed move because we do not want people to be afraid to use our wonderful park system because they feel unsafe. The committee restored these positions, however, by voting for a \$1.5 million tax increase. This was unnecessary.

I proposed an amendment that would have restored these same positions without raising taxes. By simply reprogramming some proposed spending, such as cutting the

funding for domestic partner benefits, I was able to restore this critical public safety service without burdening the taxpayers. Unfortunately, my proposal failed and the committee opted for the tax increase.

The full County Board will vote on the budget November 7th. With money being tight at the County and taxpayers already stretched to the limit, I will continue to work to persuade my colleagues on the Board to rethink their proposals and prioritize spending on the services and programs that are critically needed.



Music Under Glass

Thursdays 6:30-9:00pm
from November 2011 to March 2012

Live performances from local bands in the
Show Dome at the Mitchell Park Domes

524 South Layton Boulevard
For more information, please visit
www.countyparks.com



A big
THANK YOU
to the constituents
that attended the
District 17 October
Town Hall
Meetings!

Thank you for
taking time out of
your schedule to
stay updated on
Milwaukee County
issues and the
2012 proposed
budget.

